

The Informed Consumer

Consumer Affairs Branch e-newsletter
Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Winter 2013

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Visit **Consumer Central**:

- [File a Complaint Online](#)
- [Tenant-Landlord Handbook](#)
- [Consumer Protection Commission \(CPC\)](#)
- [Tenant-Landlord Commission \(TLC\)](#)
- [Property Owners' and Condominium Association Resources](#)
- [Consumer Focus](#)
- [Your Community, Your Call](#)

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Hosts National Consumer Protection Week 2013



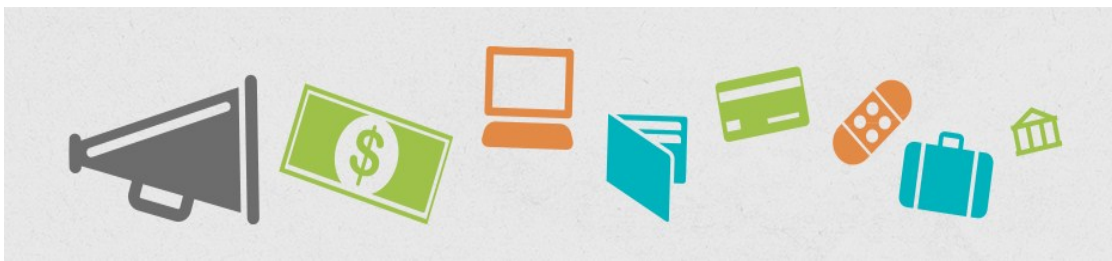
Looking to protect yourself from fraud, identity theft, and scams? Maybe you're wondering about the best way to use credit, how to shop for a used car, or maximize your security online. Fairfax County Consumer Affairs has information for you during National Consumer Protection Week, March 3-9, 2013.

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs is celebrating National Consumer Protection Week along with government agencies, advocacy organizations, and private sector groups nationwide.

Here in Fairfax, Consumer Affairs will be hosting events and workshops with industry experts, setting up information booths, and partnering with state and federal agencies to showcase consumer information.

Susan Jones, Branch Chief, stated, "Throughout the year, Fairfax County Consumer Affairs answers advice inquiries, assists consumers with pre-purchase information, and provides community outreach presentations. National Consumer Protection Week gives us the opportunity to share resources and educate consumers. Our goal is that consumers become well informed of their consumer rights and know where to turn when assistance is needed."

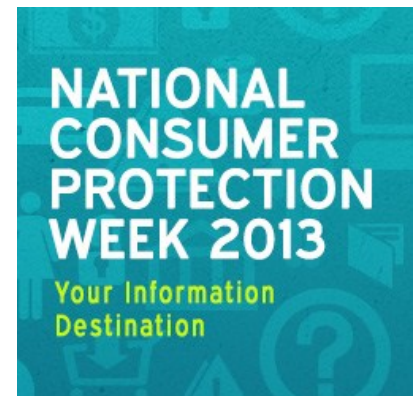
Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer for more information about Fairfax County Consumer Affairs' participation in National Consumer Protection Week. For information about nationwide resources, including the Federal Trade Commission and other national partners, visit www.ncpw.gov.



National Consumer Protection Week 2013 Schedule of Events

Monday, March 4: Buying a New TV

Buying a television is more complicated than it used to be. Join the Communications Policy and Regulation Division for advice on the features of digital TVs and advantages of the newest digital sets, such as access to the Internet. Learn how to steer clear of TVs with less up-to-date features or lower picture quality. The presentation will also discuss options for receiving TV signals, such as over-the-air broadcast and cable. Attendees are welcome to ask questions about both digital and analog TVs. Join us at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA, Conference Rooms 9/10, from 11:30 - 12:30 p.m.



Monday, March 4: Energy Saving Tips for Consumers

Would you like to learn about direct and indirect cost saving measures for home and workplace energy conservation? Do you have costly home energy bills? Join the Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch for a discussion on Home Energy Savings for Consumers featuring guest panelists from Home Performance Solutions and the US Department of Energy at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA, Conference Rooms 9/10, from 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 5: Fair Housing – Fostering an Inclusive Community

The Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch will host a panel discussion about fair housing laws. Members of the Fairfax County Fair Housing Task Force will share information about the role that fair housing plays in fostering an inclusive community. Community volunteer leaders and members will receive guidance on how to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local fair housing laws. Join us at the Fairfax County Government Center, Conference Room 9/10 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 5: Be an Informed Consumer

Education is the first line of defense in fighting fraud and scams. Join the Consumer Affairs Branch and the West Springfield Citizen's Advisory Committee to find out about the information and education available to make sure consumers know and understand their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace. Also, find out how you can help with your local [Citizen's Advisory Committee](#). Join us in the community room at the West Springfield District Police Station, 6140 Rolling Road in Springfield from 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Registration is not required.

Wednesday, March 6: What You Need To Know Before You Hire A Contractor

If you are planning springtime home improvement repairs or want to get started on a major remodeling project, you need to know how to hire a contractor. Join the Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Branch, to get the information you need so you can avoid disappointment and home repair scams by knowing why and how to hire a licensed contractor. This workshop is sponsored jointly with the Annandale Chapter of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association. The workshop starts at 11 a.m. following the 10 a.m. business meeting in the community room at the Mason District Governmental Center at 6507 Columbia Pike, in Annandale, Virginia. Directions to the meeting can be found at www.narfe.org/chapter1159.

To register for an event, please visit ncpw.eventbrite.com, email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov, or call 703-222-8435 TTY 711. Reasonable ADA accommodations are available upon request.

Need Advice?**Ask an Investigator**

Investigators are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for walk-in assistance and advice. Call 703-222-8435 TTY: 711 or submit a question via e-mail consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov.

File A Complaint

File a complaint [online](#) or request a complaint form in the mail.

Search Complaint History

Research the [complaint history](#) of a company prior to completing a transaction.

Visit Us in South County

An investigator is available each Wednesday for advice at [Access Fairfax](#) in the South County Government Center:

8350 Richmond Highway
Suite 125
Alexandria, VA 22309

In the Spotlight

[Your Community, Your Call](#)

Consumer Affairs Branch

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[Visit Our Website](#)



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Saturday, March 2—Identity Theft: How to Minimize Your Risk

Identity Theft is the fastest growing crime in America. Protecting your personal, financial and confidential information in this age of e-mail, social networking sites, blogs, online banking and smart phones requires a plan of action. Find out what you can do as part of your daily routine to minimize your risk for identity theft and get information and resources that will help you defend should identity theft strike. This event is sponsored in partnership with the George Mason Regional Library. Join us at the George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. [Register online](#) or call 703-256-3800.

Thursday, March 7—Couponing Workshop with Laura Harders

Laura Harders, author of BeltwayBargainMom.com and a Savings.com DealPro, will teach a Grocery Coupon Workshop with Consumer Affairs on Thursday, March 7 from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Gain a better understanding of how to shop with coupons using strategic couponing and menu planning techniques to achieve savings on grocery bills. Come prepared to learn, discuss, and connect with others who are excited about saving money too!



Join us in conference room 9/10 at the Fairfax County Government Center.

Unclaimed Property Search—Virginia Department of Treasury

The [Virginia Department of the Treasury's Unclaimed Property Division](#) may be holding your un-cashed paychecks, lost stocks, bonds, dividends, utility deposits, insurance claims, and more.



Stop by to meet with representatives from the VA Department of Treasury to see if any money is owed to you. Last year, over \$30,000 was returned to consumers during NCPW.

Monday, March 4: South County Center, 8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria

Tuesday, March 5: Government Center, North Atrium, Fairfax

Wednesday, March 6: Greenspring Village, 7400 Spring Village Drive, Springfield

Thursday, March 7: Cub Run Rec Center, 4630 Stonecroft Blvd, Chantilly

Friday, March 8: South County Center, 8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria

If you are unable to attend an event NCPW, you can check for your unclaimed property on the [Unclaimed Property Division](#) web site.

Register online: <http://ncpw.eventbrite.com>

5 Actions Steps for New Association Board Members

1. **Read the association's governing documents.** As a new board member, read the governing documents of your association. The governing documents are the boundaries within which the collective board will make decisions in governing the association.
2. **Familiarize yourself with the state code that governs your association.** If your association is a homeowners association, review the [Virginia Property Owners Association Act](#). If your association is a condominium association, review the [Virginia Condominium Act](#). The [Virginia Common Interest Community Ombudsman's Regulations](#) required the establishment of an association complaint procedure for alleged violations of state statutes.
3. **Review the association's contracts with industry professionals.** It is important to understand the scope of services that industry professionals have contracted to provide to the community. Keep in mind that the board does not relinquish its responsibility for managing the community just because it hires contractors to manage the tasks required for the daily operation of the association.
4. **Educate yourself about your new position.** Many industry professionals offer orientation training to their clients that will discuss the roles of the board and the scope of authority within which the board can act. [The Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute](#) offers membership benefits to include publications, educational training, and networking opportunities. The Fairfax County Homeowners' and Condominium Association Liaison coordinates educational programming and offers advice and guidance to volunteer leaders and members. Visit the [Fairfax County Homeowner and Condominium Association](#) page for more information about the educational resources available.
5. **Encourage community involvement.** Association board business is designed to be conducted during a meeting open to all members of the community. Encourage participation by ensuring that notification of meetings is published in advance. Offer an opportunity for members to express their concerns by holding a public comment period during each meeting. Every effort to increase involvement will be beneficial to the whole community because volunteer leadership evolves from engaged members.

Your Community, Your Call

View the most recent *Your Community, Your Call, The Impact of Recent Case Law* on Mondays at 8 p.m. on Fairfax County Government Channel 16 or on [Video on Demand](#). Jeremy Moss, attorney with MercerTrigiani and Paul Orlando, VP of Service First Management and Consulting, Inc. joined Michelle Thompson to discuss the impact of recent case law on a board's authority to enforce violations. The next live edition of *Your Community, Your Call* will be on Tuesday, March 12, 2013 at 7 p.m.

2013 WMCCAI Conference and Expo

Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute (WMCCAI) invites you to attend the largest community association industry event in the Washington metro area **Saturday, March 23, 2012**, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, 801 Mount Vernon Place NW, Washington, D.C.

This year's WMCCAI Conference & Expo will feature educational sessions on pertinent topics that affect those who live in and work with community associations. Approximately 190 companies and organizations will be on the exhibit hall floor showcasing goods and services of interest to community associations. [Register Today!](#)